

IN MEMORY OF KISHIN "KAY"  
BHAVNANI-RAMA

**HON. KEVIN BRADY**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, even with the joys of the holidays all around us, this week has been a sad one for The Woodlands. A 'bigger than life' bright light has left us after a long illness.

I was honored to be one of Kishin "Kay" Bhavnani's first friends when he moved to The Woodlands in 1987. Kay made any day brighter.

When he passed away on December 16, 2015 after a lengthy illness, I lost a dear friend, but Veena (Shalani), Nick and Amit lost so much more.

Kay was kindness in human form. He never met a stranger. Friends were family and anyone who needed an open shoulder found one in his presence.

Having Kay's support from my days at the Chamber to today was a blessing I can never repay. There were many nights that midnight had long passed, but Kay and I kept talking, laughing, and simply enjoying what friendship is all about.

Kay will be remembered for his bottomless hospitality. When you left his presence, you were on top of the world, because you knew you mattered.

Whether it was a great meal or engaging conversation, Papa Rama, as he was known to his many "honorary kids", was the confidant's confidant. His advice, comfort, laughter, and sometimes even a well-deserved kick in the pants to the many young friends of his sons were golden and will be sorely missed.

I will always remember his deep love of all things Elvis Presley. He was born in Hong Kong in 1938 to Sita Bai Bhavnani (nee Advani) and Ramchand Bhavnani, but he embraced America with everything he had.

He not only spent his life making everyone around him feel good, he made them look good. His tailoring talents were second to none.

Our prayers are with his soul mate of 45 years, Veena, their children, beloved grandsons, Zachary and Julian, nieces, nephews and extended family who miss Papa Rama greatly.

I am grateful for his friendship and I grieve along with the entire Rama family.

**FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR**

**HON. PETE OLSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Katy Firefighter Lt. Simon VanDyk for receiving this year's Fire Chief Gary Tilton Firefighter of the Year Award.

Lt. VanDyk's efforts to create and build a program to inform the citizens of Katy about fire and life safety practices has been a long time passion. VanDyk took it upon himself to create a program that would expand outreach and safety education in the community. Rallying other battalion chiefs, the Katy area now

has in place an educational safety program for its residents and firefighters alike. Lt. VanDyk has shown what it means to go above and beyond the call of duty and truly has improved the safety of the Katy community. Keep up the hard work and thank you for all that you do.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second District of Texas, congratulations again to Lt. Simon VanDyk for winning this year's Firefighter of the Year Award.

**A TRUE AMERICAN HERO PASSES**

**HON. ALAN S. LOWENTHAL**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened by the passing of Tibor (Ted) Rubin. Our community and our nation have lost a true hero.

Ted was born in Hungary in 1929. He survived 14 months in a Nazi concentration camp during WWII, before his liberation, and eventual migration to America.

Inspired by the American soldiers who rescued him, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, eventually being deployed as a member of the 1st Cavalry Division during the Korean War. During his service, he faced anti-Semitic discrimination from his sergeant who sent Ted on the most dangerous assignments in South Korea's Pusan Perimeter, where he fought valiantly in several notable engagements.

He was eventually captured by the North Koreans on one of these missions. During his captivity he continued to inspire others, providing moral support and improvised medical techniques to care for his fellow soldiers.

For his gallantry in close contact with the enemy and his unyielding courage and bravery while a prisoner of war Ted was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 2005.

Last August, I was proud to join Ted at a ceremony in Garden Grove to celebrate the first United States Postal Service stamp honoring the extraordinary courage of the 145 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine service members who received the Medal of Honor for action during the Korean War.

I was also proud to see the City of Garden Grove name a library after Ted earlier this year: the Garden Grove Tibor Rubin Library.

Talking about his decision to immigrate, Ted once said that America is, "... the best country in the world and I am part of it now. I do not have to worry about the Gestapo knocking on my door tonight. I have shalom—peace—people die for it."

A long-time resident of Garden Grove, Ted was an inspiration to our community in so many ways. We should all honor his perseverance, dedication, and determination to make the world a better place.

**HONORING JONI EARL**

**HON. ADAM SMITH**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Joni Earl, longtime Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Seattle area's re-

gional transit system, Sound Transit, on her retirement. Joni has been an extraordinary and transformative civic leader; forever changing the public transportation system in the Puget Sound region.

Joni's public service has been a lifelong endeavor and began when she was just a teenager, when she served as Assistant Treasurer at the City of Bremerton's City Treasurer office. Upon graduation from Washington State University, Joni would continue her career in 1987 as the City Manager of Mill Creek. Later, she brought her leadership abilities to Snohomish County as the Deputy County Executive until 2000, when she was recruited to join Sound Transit as its Chief Operating Officer (COO).

As COO, Joni was tasked with saving a \$1.9 billion light rail project that was years behind schedule and a billion dollars over budget. Just months after arriving, Joni was unexpectedly appointed to the role of CEO, where she discovered the true extent of Sound Transit's difficulties with several projects behind schedule, over budget, and in danger of losing federal and public support.

With the agency's future very much in doubt, Joni spearheaded Sound Transit's remarkable turnaround in the early 2000s. She immersed herself in the subject material, gaining a realistic perspective from agency staff and realigning expectations for the then-troubled light rail line. Her skillful navigation of the relationship with the Sound Transit board, which includes local elected officials from throughout the region, won her the trust of Democrats and Republicans alike. To those who had worked with Joni in the past, the transformation of Sound Transit came as no surprise: her career is filled with stories of successful turnarounds.

Thanks to Joni's careful stewardship, the Puget Sound region's transit system is today on stable footing with Sound Transit rolling out new light rail and bus service. The initial portion of an extensive light rail system—the first of its kind in the region—was up and running by 2009; in 2016, a new light rail extension to the University of Washington is set to open months ahead of schedule and \$150 million under budget. Moving forward, Sound Transit is expected to expand its light rail throughout the region, providing new transportation opportunities for citizens and transforming the economic vitality of the region in the process.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I recognize Joni Earl on her retirement from Sound Transit and for her lifetime of service to the Puget Sound region. It is without a doubt that her leadership and commitment to a better future of public transit will continue to impact the region for generations to come.

**CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUCKER PRO LEGENDS & HOLCOMBE RUCKER PARK**

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, December 18, 2015*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Holcombe Rucker Park; and the legacy, and work of The Rucker Pro Legends of Basketball fame, a dynamic organization and an excellent community service provider. On Friday, August 14th